

1903 AL-NL Agreement

Written by MLB Agreement
Monday, 29 November 1999 19:00

NATIONAL AGREEMENT

FOR THE GOVERNMENT OF

PROFESSIONAL BASE BALL CLUBS

PREAMBLE

This Agreement, made and entered into by and between the National League and American Association of Professional Base Ball Clubs, and the American League of Professional Base Ball Clubs, known and designated herein as Major Leagues, parties of the first part, each with the other and both, jointly and severally, by and with the National Association of Professional Base Ball Leagues, known and referred to herein as Minor Leagues, party of the second part, shall be styled the National Agreement, and shall have for its objects:

(1) Perpetuation of base ball as the national pastime of America, by surrounding it with such safeguards as will warrant absolute public confidence in its integrity and methods, and by maintaining a high standard of skill and sportsmanship in its players.

(2) Protection of the property rights of those engaged in base ball as a business without sacrificing the spirit of competition in the conduct of the clubs.

(3) Promotion of the welfare of ball players as a class by developing and perfecting them in their profession and enabling them to secure adequate compensation for expertness.

(4) Adoption of a uniform code of rules for playing base ball.

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ARTICLE I.

Section 1. This agreement shall be indissoluble except by the unanimous vote of the parties to it, and if any of said parties withdraws from it, or violates any of its fundamental principles the party so withdrawing or offending shall be treated as the enemy of organized base ball.

ARTICLE II.

Section 1. Each party to this Agreement retains the right to conduct its affairs and govern its players according to the constitution and by laws.

ARTICLE III.

Section 1. Each year a committee of three from each of the Major Leagues to this Agreement,--the National and American League,-- shall meet and adopt a code of rules to regulate the playing of base ball for the ensuing season, a majority vote being required to adopt, revise or repeal a rule.

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ARTICLE IV.

Section 1. A commission of three members, to be known as the National Commission, is hereby created with power to construe and carry out the terms and provisions of this Agreement, excepting when it pertains to the internal affairs of the National Association. One member shall be the President of the National League and one the President of the American League. These two members shall meet, on or before the first Monday of January in each year, to elect by majority vote a suitable person as the third member. The third member so chosen shall be the Chairman of the Commission for one year from the date of his election, and shall preside at all meetings. Each member shall have a vote on all questions which may come before it, except as hereinafter directed. A Secretary shall be elected yearly. The salary of the Chairman shall be \$..... per annum, in addition to living and traveling expenses incurred in the discharge of his official duties. Other members of the Commission shall serve without compensation. The salary of the Secretary shall be \$..... per annum. Immediately after the election of a Chairman and Secretary, the Commission shall proceed to the transaction of such business as many properly come before it.

Sec. 2. Sessions of the Commission, in addition to the annual meeting on the first Monday in January of each year, shall be held at the call of the Chairman, or at the request of the two other members of the Commission.

Sec. 3. The National Commission shall have the power to inflict and enforce fines or suspensions, or both, upon either party to this Agreement, who are adjudged by it to have violated the letter or spirit of this Agreement.

Sec. 4. Whenever a National League Club or an American League Club claims the services of the same player by selection, reservation or contract, the right to said player shall be established by the decision of the Chairman of the Commission, who shall determine the case on

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the law and evidence without the aid of either of his associates.

Sec. 5. Whenever a National League Club or a Minor League Club cannot amicably arrange differences over a player, the testimony shall be heard and the case adjudicated by the Chairman of the Commission and the representative of the American League. If the contention be between an American League Club and a Minor League Club, the decision shall be made by the Chairman of the Commission and the representative of the National League. If the Chairman of the Commission and the major league member entitled to vote on any question arising between a major and minor league club shall not agree, the Chairman's findings shall determine the case.

ARTICLE V.

Section 1. The circuits of each major league shall consist of the following cities: National League--Boston, New York, Brooklyn, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Chicago, St. Louis and Cincinnati. American League--Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Washington, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago and St. Louis. Neither major league circuit shall be changed without the consent of the majority of the clubs of each major league. It is further provided that there shall be no consolidation in any city where two major league clubs exist; nor shall any club transfer or release its players for the purpose of injuring or weakening the league of which it is a member; provided, however, that the circuit of either major league may be changed by transferring either of the above-mentioned franchises to some other city on consent of the majority of the clubs of each major league. Provided, further, that if either of the major leagues in changing their circuits shall choose a city in which a club of the National Association is located, such major league shall then be required to pay to the league in the National Association of which such city may be a member the sum of \$2,500. Provided, further, that when a major league shall change its circuit and choose a city in which a club of the National Association is located, such club shall be compensated for any assets that they may have by the club desiring to locate in such city; and upon failure to agree upon such compensation, the matter shall be determined by arbitration, the arbitration committee to consist of three members, one of whom shall be the

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President of the National Commission, one a member of the major league.
desiring to locate in such city, and the third a member of the
National Association. The finding of a majority of said committee to
be final.

Sec. 2. The party of the second part hereby guarantees that
none of the leagues in its membership shall establish or maintain a club in a city
on the circuit of either major league, or within five miles of the limits thereof,
without the consent in writing of the major league club or clubs
located therein and recorded in the office of the Secretary of the National
Commission, Jersey City excepted.

ARTICLE VI.

Section 1. All parties to this instrument pledge themselves to recognize the right
of reservation and respect contracts between players and clubs under its
protection.

Sec. 2. Any club or league which harbors a player who refuses to observe his
contract with a club member of any party to this Agreement, or to abide by its
reservation, shall be considered an outlaw organization, and its claim
to contractual and territorial rights ignored.

Sec. 3. The right and title of a major league club to its players shall be absolute,
and can be only terminated by release or failure to reserve under the terms of
this Agreement by the club to which a player has been under
contract. When a major league club serves notice of release on one of its
players, he shall be ineligible to contract with a club of another league if, during
ten days after the service of such notice of release, a club in the league
in which he has been playing shall demand his services.

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Sec. 4. The practice of farming is prohibited. All right or claim of a major league club to a player shall cease when such player becomes a member of a minor league club, and no arrangement between clubs for the loan or return of a player shall be binding between the parties to it or recognized by other clubs.

Sec. 5. The National Association shall have the classification of its leagues, and the adoption of a salary limit for its clubs, according to such classification, and it agrees to withdraw protection from any league which allows any of its clubs to exceed the salary limit prescribed for leagues of its classification.

Sec. 6. The right of a minor league club to its players shall be absolute, except that from September 1 to October 15 of each year, major league clubs shall have the privilege of selecting players from the National Association clubs for the following season, upon payment of \$750 for each player so selected from clubs in Class "A" leagues; \$500 for each player so selected from clubs in Class "B"; leagues; \$300 for each player so selected from clubs in Class "C" leagues, and \$200 for each player so selected from clubs of a lower class, the payments to be made to the Secretary of the National Association, through the Secretary of the Commission, as follows: One-half of the amount when the selection is made, and one-half of the amount on June 1 following, the player to revert to the club from which he was selected if the selecting club defaults on any of the payments, the player also to revert to the club from which he was selected if when released he is not signed within ten days by a club of a minor league; provided, however, that not more than two players shall be selected from any Class "A" club during any one year.

Sec. 7. Any club entitled to make selection of a player, and desiring to do so, shall notify the Secretary of the National Commission, stating the name of the player and of the club to which he is under contract and reservation, and enclosing the amount specified in the preceding section to be paid for such release or draft. The Secretary shall thereupon notify the Secretary of the National Association, who shall thereupon immediately notify the club and league from which such selection shall be made, and shall order the transfer of the player to the selecting club at the close of the current season. Such selection and transfer shall thereupon be promulgated, and if such selection is revoked, or default made in payments, immediate notice thereof shall be given to the clubs of all parties to this Agreement, and any other club in the same league may be subrogated to the rights of the club

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defaulting in said payments, by paying to the club defaulting the sum so advanced.

Sec. 8. A major league club may at any time purchase the release of a player from a minor league club, to take effect forthwith or at a specified date, provided such purchase is recorded with the Secretary of the Commission and Secretary of the National Association for promulgation within five days of the transaction.

Sec. 9. If a selected player is released within the year of, or the next year after, his selection, by a major league club, and no other major league club claims him prior to the expiration of his notice of release, the minor league club which lost him by selection shall have the priority of right to him over all clubs.

Sec. 10. The selection of a player made by a major league club under an arrangement with a minor league club for the return of the selected player after the expiration of the period of selection, shall be void, and the National Commission shall impose a fine of \$500 on each club which becomes a party to a conspiracy to prevent a player from advancing in his profession, or in any way abusing the privilege of selection.

ARTICLE VII.

Section 1. On or before the 25th day of September in each year the Secretary of each party to this Agreement shall transmit to the Secretary of the Commission a list of players then under contract with each of its several club members for the current season and in addition thereto a list of such players reserved in any prior annual reserve list who have refused to contract with such clubs. Such players, together with all others thereafter to be regularly contracted with by such clubs (namely, those whose releases have been secured for future services by purchase or selection by draft

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under this Agreement), are and shall be ineligible to contract with any other club of any league during the period of time between the termination of their contracts and the beginning of the next season. The Secretary of the Commission shall thereupon promulgate such lists. No club shall be permitted to reserve any player while in arrears of salary to him. Failure of a club to tender a contract to a player by March 1 shall operate as a release.

ARTICLE VIII.

Section 1. All contracts between clubs and players in the major league shall be in a form prescribed by the National Commission.

Sec. 2. Any agreement between club and player for service, evidenced by written acceptance whether by letter or telegram or receipt from player for money advanced to him to bind such agreement, shall be construed to be a contract and held to be binding, provided the player declines to enter into a formal contract, but his refusal to sign such formal contract shall render him ineligible to play with the contracting club for more than a period of ten days or to enter the service of a club of any party to this Agreement unless released.

Sec. 3. When a player of a major or a minor league club shall be suspended for a stated period or indefinitely, in accordance with his contract and the constitution and by-laws of the league of which his club is a member, the Secretary of such association shall give notice of such disqualification to the Secretary of the National Commission, who shall at once promulgate the same, and such disqualified player shall not be eligible to play with or against the club or any party to this Agreement until such disqualification shall have been removed and notice of such revocation promulgated by the Secretary of the National Commission.

Sec. 4. In all cases before it for adjudication the National Commission

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shall have the right to require affidavits from parties in interest and other witnesses, and may demand the production of documentary evidence. Failure to furnish testimony under oath or affirmation or documentary evidence by a party in interest, within such time as may be specified by the Chairman of the Commission, shall result in the award of the case against the delinquent party.

Sec. 5. A player suspended by a club or league for a term longer than ten days shall have the right of appeal to the National Commission, which is given authority to order his reinstatement if it deems the punishment excessive or not merited. This and other questions may be determined by a mail vote by members of the Commission.

ARTICLE IX.

Section 1. The Secretary of the National Commission, who shall act as treasurer in addition to his other duties, shall furnish a sufficient bond for the faithful performance of his duties and the safekeeping of all moneys which come into his custody in the administration of his office. He shall keep the minutes of each meeting and preserve a correct record of all contracts, releases, reservations, selections, suspensions and reinstatements of players and shall provide himself with an official stamp for certifying the time of receipt by him of all official documents.

Sec. 2. On the receipt of a notice of selection he shall note upon it in ink the amount of money accompanying it, the date and hour of its arrival, and adopt every precaution possible to prevent complications over the priority in time of the filing of selections of players by different clubs, and the club which first registers its selection of a player with the Secretary, as provided herein, shall be entitled to the services of such player.

Sec. 3. The Secretary shall prepare and promulgate all decisions and

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_____ rulings of the National Commission, unless the Chairman _____ assigns the duty to himself or another member.

Sec. 4. The expenses of the Commission herein provided _____ for shall be paid by the major leagues share and share _____ alike. Each major league shall pay to the Secretary _____ of the Commission \$500 for current expenses at the time _____ of the adoption of this Agreement.

ARTICLE X.

Section 1. Every _____ league shall strictly enforce the provisions in its constitution against open betting on its grounds, and club officials _____ are required to cause the arrest and prosecution of those _____ who engage in the practice.

Sec. 2. No _____ game or series of games shall be played for a stake between _____ clubs of any party to this agreement, nor shall any player _____ of a club accept or agree to accept a sum of money or _____ present of great value as an inducement or reward for _____ special effort on his part in winning or trying to win a game.

Approved September 11, 1903.

Source: 1904 Reach Guide, pp. 115-123.